

Governor Barbour Announces Executive Council Departures, Changes

Jones, Fortenberry Return to Private Sector, Phillips to Move from Narcotics to Public Safety

(Jackson, Miss.) Governor Haley Barbour today announced two departures from his Executive Council and one change in responsibilities. Division of Medicaid Executive Director Dr. Warren A. Jones and Commissioner of Public Safety Rusty Fortenberry will be leaving the Administration to return to the private sector. George Phillips, Director of the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, will become the new Commissioner of Public Safety.

Jones, Fortenberry and Phillips have each held their positions since the beginning of the Barbour Administration in January 2004. Jones will be leaving his post effective July 1, 2005, and will be returning to the University Medical Center where he served previously as Associate Vice Chancellor.

Rusty Fortenberry will resign his post effective at the end of the month and will be joining a Jackson law firm. Before becoming Commissioner of Public Safety, Fortenberry practiced law in Mendenhall. Phillips, a former U.S. Attorney before heading the Bureau of Narcotics, will

take over at the Department of Public Safety immediately following Fortenberry's departure.

Governor Barbour said Mississippi will miss Jones and Fortenberry. "Both Commissioner Fortenberry and Dr. Jones took substantial pay cuts when they left their previous jobs to enter public service. Each did an outstanding job in addressing important, challenging issues.

The integration of the Bureau of Narcotics into the Department of Public Safety was achieved smoothly and with very positive effect under Commissioner Fortenberry. Drug arrests, drug seizures and drug convictions are up, even though the Bureau of Narcotics is operating with fewer personnel than two years ago.

Further, Commissioner Fortenberry successfully achieved one of this Administration's main goals by significantly improving the working relationship between state law enforcement and local law enforcement. Most policing is done by police departments and sheriffs' departments, and it is critical that state law enforcement works closely and effectively with them. Commissioner Fortenberry and his team have accomplished that goal on a statewide basis.

Dr. Warren A. Jones came to Medicaid at a time when it was in crisis. Spending prior to his arrival was out of

control; the beneficiary rolls had exploded; and it was clear that serious policy changes were necessary. Since then there has been major reform, some originating with this Administration, and some originating in the Legislature. The result is now we have the opportunity for a sustainable Medicaid program that provides quality health care for the poor and other beneficiaries.

Warren Jones deserves a tremendous amount of personal credit for the changes that have come about at the Division of Medicaid. He has worked tirelessly amid difficult circumstances, and our Medicaid Program is far better off because of his efforts and those of his team.

I am grateful to both of these men for their hard work and personal sacrifice, and I understand full well that they owe it to their families to return to the private sector after a year and a half of dedicated public service,” said Governor Barbour

Barbour said moving Phillips into the role of Commissioner of Public Safety was a natural. “George Phillips was an outstanding choice to head the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, where he has done a tremendous job. He is the obvious choice to succeed Commissioner Fortenberry as the head of Public Safety. I don’t expect the Department, the Highway Patrol, MBN or any of the any of the other elements of DPS to miss a beat,” he said.

Governor Barbour said his Administration has already begun the search for a new Medicaid executive director and Bureau of Narcotics director. "We have begun a search to have a successor to Dr Jones by the end of June, and we have also begun a search for a Director for the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, which will be under the strong leadership of Deputy Director Donald Butler in the interim."

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